

GPA requirements benefit University

Next fall the University will compute grade point averages on students' report cards. These GPA requirements will be easier to understand and calculate than the percentage rules currently used.

The present graduation requirements stipulate students must pass 85 percent of their University work with grades of A, B, C, D, or P. Seventy-five percent of the students' classes must be passed with grades of A, B, C, or P. These rules are complicated and difficult to calculate.

The new GPA requirements mandate students to have a 2.00 GPA minimum to graduate. Pluses and minuses will be included and count as three-tenths of a grade point.

Academic warnings and probation also will be included in the system. A warning will come if a student has a GPA lower than 2.00 for one term, but a cumulative GPA higher than 2.00. Probation occurs when the cumulative GPA is lower than 2.00.

This system comes as the result of an agreement in 1979 between faculty and the University Registrar to simplify GPA requirements. The University recently obtained the computer support needed to convert students' records from the percentage to the GPA system.

The GPA system is long overdue. Now that it is here, students will be able to calculate their GPA and know where they stand in terms of graduating. The University also will be better able to keep track of a student's progress.

It may take a while to adjust to the changes, but the overall result will be more beneficial. The GPA system will benefit everyone.

Offender's scarlet letter unnecessary punishment

Recently, a Multnomah County Circuit Court judge ordered a sex offender to place warning signs reading "dangerous sex offender, no children allowed" on his motor vehicle and residence. The judge claimed the signs would protect the neighborhood and children.

This disciplinary action, however, will cause more problems than it solves.

The signs will inhibit the offender's attempt to become reintegrated with society. Even after he serves his short jail sentence and mandatory treatment program, people will continue to distrust him, invoking needless ambivalence.

The offender will be shunned from society as a result of the signs. The distrust the signs instill will cause potential apartment managers and employers to avoid dealing with the offender, imbedding in him a frustration with society — a frustration that may lead to more crime.

Moreover, the public reaction to the signs may not stop at distrust. The signs may elicit verbal abuse, and the potential for vigilante physical abuse against the offender will be enhanced.

Although the signs may protect the public, the offender will be placed in considerable danger.

Rather than advertise an offender's problems, the judicial system should impose either a stiffer jail sentence or extend and intensify the treatment program.

Signs do not solve the problem. Instead, they merely make the problem known — and this will serve to make the situation worse.



Letters

Creation/Evolution debate a sham

Just four days after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Louisiana law requiring the teaching of "creation science" in public schools as a "sham," the Restoration Campus Ministry conducted a sham in the guise of a debate on campus on June 23, proving if nothing else fundamentalists are not easily dissuaded from their carefully orchestrated tactics.

Commentary by
Aaron Knox

Louisiana law, according to the Court, may not require public schools teaching evolution to also teach creationism. The law does not even mandate the teaching of creationism, the Court pointed out. Rather, it requires the teaching of the theory only when the theory of evolution also is taught.

Fundamentalists like Dr. Dwayne Gish, associate director of the Institute for Creation Science, argue the Louisiana law promotes academic freedom by providing all the alternative theories for students.

It is a nice sentiment, but it

disguises the true cause of the fundamentalist movement. Justice William Brennan, writing for the majority, captured the essence of that cause when he said "the pre-eminent purpose... was clearly to advance the religious viewpoint that a supernatural being created humankind."

Brennan went on to say that "while the court is normally deferential to a state's articulation of a secular purpose (for a law), it is required that the statement of such purpose be sincere and not a sham."

Gish makes his living promoting creationism in the public forum. By his own admission, he has participated "in over 200 debates in the last 10 years." His adversary in the RCM-sponsored debate last week was University biology professor Dr. David Wagner, whose last formal debate on the subject — against Gish and RCM-sponsored, occurred four years ago. Wagner, in his opening remarks, called himself an "intellectual hobbyist" in his study of creationism.

The format of the debate, while not favoring one side more than the other, favored whoever ignored its rules. Gish and Wagner exchanged, both in writing and on the phone, a number of proposed questions from which each was to extract his arguments. Wagner, speaking first, identified the questions he was answering, and structured his remarks accordingly.

The first statement made by Gish in his subsequent argument was inconsistent with the question he had himself provided to Wagner. Gish chose, for reasons of his own, to ignore Wagner's questions and launched into a prepared statement that sought to refute evolu-

tionist theories rather than to defend creationist ones.

The day after the debate Gish said, "I use a pretty standard format for all my debates. The evolutionists never seem to know what they are going to say in advance, or they change their minds, so I use the same arguments for all of them."

All of this adds up a stacked deck, and Wagner himself said it best when he prefaced his argument by saying "I realize that in agreeing to this debate I have already lost."

Dick Beswick, director of RCM, served as moderator for the debate. He admitted afterwards Gish did not address Wagner's questions, but defended the debate as "a success." His most revealing admission, however, was in reaction to the audience/question portion of the debate. "I was disturbed because the audience ignored my instructions about questioning (Wagner and Gish), but that portion of the debate did bring out some interesting philosophical questions."

The irony should not be lost on the casual observer. It was only at the point where the audience digressed from the formal rules of the debate and where Gish was forced to address the same questions as Wagner, and it was that portion of the debate that most displeased Beswick.

The fight between evolutionists and creationists is a valid, intellectual one, and it should be encouraged at all turns. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that what occurs is in fact a debate and not merely a platform for creationist (or, for that matter, evolutionist) theory.

Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, 97403. Daily publication will resume with the fall term.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices on the third floor of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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